

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01  
SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 /052 W  
-----110504Z 118881 /22

O R 110432Z MAR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE NIACT 2579  
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 1969

EO 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SOPN PINT KS US  
SUBJ: STATEMENTS BY NDP CHAIRMAN IN US AND REACTIONS IN KOREA

REF: SEOUL 1879

SUMMARY: YI CH'OL-SUNG'S SUPPORT OF ROKG POSITIONS IN US STATEMENTS HAS RECEIVED MAJOR PRESS ATTENTION AND PLEASED GOVERNMENT. MOST OTHERS INCLUDING SOME OF HIS OWN PARTY FOLLOWERS ARE DISMAYED OR DISGUSTED. END SUMMARY.

1. PUBLIC STATEMENTS MADE BY YI CH OL-SUNG, NDP CHAIRMAN, DURING CURRENT TRIP TO US HAVE RECEIVED STEADY AND HEAVIER TRAN NORMAL FRONT-PAGE PRESS COVERAGE IN KOREA, INCLUDING PICTURES.

2. YI'S FIRST STOP IN US AT CHINCPAC WAS COVERED IN STRAIGHTFORWARD WAY, BUT ALREADY THE EXTENT OF PRESS COVERAGE WAS NOTABLE. IN HIS SPEECH IN LOS ANGELES ON MARCH 4, YI WAS REPORTED AS CHARGING THAT SOME OVERSEAS KOREANS ARE "UNWITTINGLY CONTRIBUTING TO NORTH KOREA'S UNITED FRONT STRATEGY" AND THAT THEIR ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES "COULD BE CONFUSED WITH ANTI-STATE AND ANTI-NATIONAL ONES." YI'S MARCH 7 APPEARANCES IN  
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NEW YORK CITY AT ASIA SOCIETY AND COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS ALSO DREW FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE ON MARCH 8 AND 9. SEVERAL PAPERS USED AP STORY WHICH INCLUDED PHRASE NOTING THAT YI "HAS BEEN CRITICIZED BY SOME IN HIS PARTY FOR HIS PRO-GOVERNMENT VIEWS." MAIN POINT OF STORY IS YI'S VIEW THAT LESS FOREIGN CRITICISM OF HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN KOREA MIGHT LEAD PRESIDENT PAK TO CANCEL

EM-9. ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PAPERS STRESSED YI'S STATEMENT THAT US FORCES SHOULD REMAIN IN KOREA FOR TEN YEARS MORE, OR UNTIL "SECURITY OF KOREA IS FULLY ASSURED."

3. MOST UNUSUAL ITEM APPEARED IN MARCH 9 HAN'GUK ILBO COVERAGE OF YI'S SPEECH TO COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS. ARTICLE BY WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT SAID YI CRITICIZED US FOR "SHAKING THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS OF THE NATION BY TAKING HARSH MEASURES TO LIMIT TRADE WITH KOREA, WHICH IS BARELY AT THE TAKE-OFF STAGE, BECAUSE OF KOREA'S HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS." COMMENT: WHILE LINKAGE OF US-ROK TRADE ISSUES WITH HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS HAS BEEN MENTIONED BY INDIVIDUAL KOREANS TO EMBOFFS FOR AT LEAST TWO MONTHS, WE BELIEVE THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT KOREAN PRESS HAS PUBLISHED THIS ALLEGATION, EVEN AS A QUOTE. EMBOFFS HAVE VIGOROUSLY DENIED SUCH LINKAGE AND HAVE STRESSED INDEPENDENCE OF ITC, KEY INSTITUTION IN THESE DECISIONS. END COMMENT.

4. AT RECENT BLUE HOUSE PRESS CONFERENCE (REFTEL), PAK REPORTEDLY INDICATED THAT HE WAS VERY MUCH SATISFIED WITH REPORTS ON YI'S ON-GOING VISIT TO U.S. HEAVY PRESS COVERAGE OF TRIP SEEMS PRETTY CLEARLY A REFLECTION OF GOVERNMENT APPROVAL. ONE POLITICAL OBSERVER COMMENTED TO EMBOFF THAT YI, WHOM THE GOVERNMENT SUPPORTED FOR NDP LEADER LAST YEAR, HAD "RECEIVED SOME REQUESTS" FROM GOVERNMENT BEFORE GOING ABROAD.

5. WHILE ROK IS HAPPY, NDP IS NOT. WE HAVE UNPRINTED HAPDONG STORY THAT PARTY SPOKESMAN HAS SENT REQUEST TO YI TO CONFIDENTIAL

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KEEP QUIET. AT AN NDP POLITICAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL MEETING MARCH 8, THREE OF SIX MEMBERS OF NDP SUPREME COMMITTEE VOICED STRONG CRITICISM OF YI FOR HIS STATEMENTS IN THE U.S. AND, AS REPORTED SEPTTEL, FORMER YI SUPPORTER O SE-UNG SHARPLY CRITICIZED YI IN CONVERSATION WITH DCM. YI SUPPORTERS WERE ABLE TO POSTPONE DISCUSSION OF YI'S PERFORMANCE UNTIL HE RETURNS, BUT EVEN ACTING CHAIRMAN (AND YI SUPPORTER) SIN TO-HWAN DID NOT MOUNT EXPECTED DEFENSE OF YI. OTHER OPPOSITION TYPES WE HAVE SEEN RECENTLY ARE GENERALLY DISGUSTED.

6. COMMENT: WHILE YI'S OPPOSITION TO TROOP WITHDRAWAL AND CONCERN ABOUT TRADE RESTRICTIONS ARE CONCERNS SHARED BY ALL KOREANS, HIS LINKAGE OF THESE ISSUES TO HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTION AND HIS WARNING NOT TO PRESS PRESIDENT PAK ON HUMAN RIGHTS APPEAR TO BE EXTRAORDINARILY ACCOMMODATING TO THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION. YI APPEARS IN CONVERSATION SINCERELY MOTIVATED BY VIEW THAT MIDDLE OF THE ROAD APPROACH TO PAK REGIME ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OTHER KEY ISSUES IS MOST EFFICACIOUS COURSE TO PURSUE. HIS U.S. PRONOUNCEMENTS ARE HARD TO EXPLAIN ON THIS BASIS ALONE,

HOWEVER, AND WE TEND TO SUBSCRIBE TO GENERAL VIEW THAT YI IS  
SIMPLY REPAYING GOVERNMENT FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT HE RECEIVED IN  
HIS SUCCESSFUL RUN FOR PARTY LEADERSHIP LAST YEAR, AS WELL AS  
TRYING TO INSURE CONTINUING FLOW OF FUNDS FROM ROKG. EVEN  
WITH CONTINUING ROKG SUPPORT, HOWEVER, HE MAY NOW HAVE LEANED  
SO FAR IN ROKG DIRECTION AS TO JEOPARDIZE THE ALREADY TENUOUS  
HOLD HE HAS OVER HIS FRACTIOUS PARTY COALITION.  
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## Message Attributes

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